

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A method of providing mental stimulus to a subject having a medically diagnosed dementia, the method comprising causing the subject to handle an article that comprises a plurality of pieces that (a) individually have a surface layer formed of a soft fabric, and (b) collectively exhibit differing tactility when handled by the subject.
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2. The method of Claim 1 wherein each of the pieces consists essentially of a soft fabric surface layer.
3. The method of Claim 1 wherein each of the pieces has two opposing surfaces formed of the same or different soft fabrics.
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4. The method of Claim 1 wherein the surface layers of the pieces are formed of soft fabrics selected from the group consisting of knitted, woven, piliferous and spongiform textiles and real and simulated furs, skins and leathers.
5. The method of Claim 1 wherein the article comprises a plurality of soft fabric swatches removably bound together along an edge to form a stack.
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6. The method of Claim 1 wherein the article comprises a plurality of soft fabric sheets irremovably bound together along an edge to form a book wherein the sheets form pages.
7. The method of Claim 1 wherein the article is a kit comprising a plurality of pieces that are soft fabric patches, each patch being attachable along an edge thereof to one or more other patches, by attaching means not requiring a high level of cognitive and/or manual dexterity, to form a patchwork article.
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8. The method of Claim 7 wherein the kit further comprises said attaching means.
9. The method of Claim 7 wherein the attaching means is a stitching means comprising a large, blunt needle with a large eye, and a sufficient quantity of a stitching thread or yarn of sufficient thickness to be readily visible and manipulable by the subject.
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10. The method of Claim 7 wherein the attaching means is a lacing means comprising a series of holes in an edge region of each patch, and a sufficient number of laces of suitable length for threading through the holes to attach aligned patches together.
11. The method of Claim 1 wherein the article is a kit comprising (a) a plurality of tile elements having one or more faces that are compressively resilient to human touch, each of said tile elements comprising a soft fabric surface layer, a substantially rigid base or core, and a subsurface compressively resilient layer interposed between the surface layer and the base or core; and (b) a rack comprising (i) means for engaging the tile elements at a plurality of loci on the rack, and (ii) a rack base whereon the tile elements can rest.
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12. The method of Claim 1 wherein the subject experiences pleasurable tactile stimulation derived from handling said article.
13. The method of Claim 12 wherein the patient additionally experiences pleasurable stimulation of at least one sense selected from the group consisting of the visual, aural and olfactory senses.
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14. A kit useful for providing mental stimulus to a subject having a medically diagnosed dementia, the kit comprising (a) a plurality of tile elements having one or more faces that are compressively resilient to human touch, each of said tile elements comprising a soft fabric surface layer, a substantially rigid base or core, and a subsurface compressively resilient layer interposed between the surface layer and the base or core; and (b) a rack comprising (i) means for engaging the tile elements at a plurality of loci on the rack, and (ii) a rack base whereon the tile elements can rest.
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15. The kit of Claim 14 wherein the soft fabric is selected from the group consisting of knitted, woven and piliferous textiles, furs, skins, leathers and simulations thereof.
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16. The kit of Claim 14 wherein each tile element comprises a rigid base and has a single compressively resilient face.

17. The kit of Claim 14 wherein each tile element comprises a rigid core and has two opposing compressively resilient faces.
 18. The kit of Claim 14 wherein the rack comprises a frame having a plurality of apertures each adapted to receive one of said tile elements.
 - 5 19. The kit of Claim 14 wherein the rack comprises a frame having an aperture and wherein an integral number of said tile elements are of such sizes and shapes as to substantially fill the aperture.
 20. The kit of Claim 14 wherein the rack base has perpendicularly mounted thereon a plurality of pegs arranged to define a plurality of receiving areas for the tile elements.
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